UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

GENERAL

E/ECE/1264
23 March 1992

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Forty-seventh session
(Provisional Agenda item 6)

THE FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION IN REGARD TO COOPERATION IN THE ECE REGION, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF COMMISSION DECISION O (45)

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. This report has been prepared to assist the Commission in its consideration, under agenda item 6, of the prospective activities of the Commission with particular regard to the provisions of decision O (45).

2. Recalling that in paragraph 1 of decision O (45) the Commission decided on the following priority areas of activity: environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation and economic analysis, and that at its regular forty-fifth session the Commission also designated as a general priority its activities designed to assist countries in transition to a market economy and their integration into the European and the global economy, the future work and activities of the Commission are presented in a format that reflects this decision. By its decisions D (42) and I (43) the Commission designated the transport of dangerous goods and EDIFACT respectively as priority tasks. By its decisions G (44) and H (45) it designated sustainable development as a guiding principle for all its relevant activities.

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3. The Commission will review its activities and the implementation of its priorities since the forty-sixth session under agenda item 2(a). The consideration of priority activities under agenda item 6 is intended to be prospective rather than retrospective.

4. A detailed account of the Commission's work designed to assist countries in transition to a market economy and to integrate them into the European and global economy is contained in documents E/ECE/1254 and 1258.

Environment

5. Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems meeting at ministerial level on 25 February 1991 (ECE/ENVWA/19), Signatories to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (E/ECE/1250) will strive for the entry into force of this Convention as soon as possible and seek to implement the Convention to the maximum extent possible pending its entry into force. The second meeting of the Signatories to the Convention to be convened in December 1992 is expected in particular to make recommendations as regards further measures for the interim implementation of the Convention.

6. Conscious of the special importance the Commission attaches to the elaboration of regional legal instruments in the field of environment (decision 0 (45), paragraph 2 I(a)) the Senior Advisers completed the elaboration of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. These Conventions were adopted by the Senior Advisers at their resumed fifth session at Ministerial level in Helsinki (Finland) on 17 and 18 March 1992, and signed by a large number of Governments on that occasion. (see also E/ECE/1252/Rev.1)

7. The Senior Advisers will pay special attention to activities which could support environmentally sound development in countries in transition (ECE/ENVWA/24, Annex II, programme elements 03.1.1; 03.1.2; 03.1.3; 03.1.4 and 03.4.5).

8. The Senior Advisers are expected to adopt, at their next session, inter alia, a regional strategy on integrated waste management; recommendations to ECE Governments on water-quality objectives and criteria; and a code of practice on ecosystems-based water management.

9. The Senior Advisers will adopt a detailed programme for the systematic and analytic reviewing of the performance of ECE countries non-members of OECD in meeting domestic environmental policy objectives and regional commitments to be undertaken in close cooperation with OECD. The Senior Advisers will also prepare initial elements of an evolving environmental programme for Europe and elements for a Ministerial Declaration as their contribution to a Conference "Environment for Europe" to be held in Switzerland in winter 1992/1993.

10. At the ninth session of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution it was agreed that the Working Group on Strategies will, as a first priority, prepare a draft protocol for further reduction of sulphur emissions after 1993. A new Task Force on Economic

Aspects of Abatement Strategies will support the Working Group in the practical development of cost-effective agreements. A new Working Group on Technology will, inter alia, address issues on exchange of technology.

11. Since the Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes entered into force on 14 February 1991, work will be carried out on further steps to reduce national annual emissions or their transboundary fluxes (article 2) as well as consideration of procedures to create more favourable conditions for the exchange of technology to reduce emission of NO_x (article 3).

12. Substantive work began in 1991 concerning persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals with a view to possible future protocols on these issues. Relevant Task Forces will work towards providing information by 1994 as a basis for elements of such protocols. The critical load concept is expected to be considered as an integral part in negotiations of abatement strategies for various air pollutants of concern to the Executive Body.

13. In support of the Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes, adopted in 1991, the EMEP monitoring programme will be expanded in 1992 to include sampling and analysis of selected volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Transport

14. Considering the relevant Commission decisions, in particular D (45), O (45) and F (46), the Inland Transport Committee discussed at its fifty-fourth session future work and activities. In the light of the development of a single European market and the changes in central and eastern Europe, the Committee will consider the overall European transport situation. In this connection it will participate, together with other international organizations and institutions, in the elaboration of a European transport concept and of detailed, action-oriented projects to implement it as contained in the Prague Declaration on an all-European transport policy. To this end, it will cooperate with other international organizations in the development of a European infrastructure transport system. This work, among others, will serve as a basis for a harmonized European transport network able to accommodate the significant traffic increase which is expected in Europe. In this respect the decision by the Committee to undertake a study on main European inland waterways of international importance through the elaboration of a draft European Agreement (AGN) is of special importance. Emphasis will also be placed on infrastructure needs for the different transport modes, in particular in central and east European countries.

15. Another important future task will be the further development of intermodal transport, which has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years as a result of increasing demands for enviromentally sound transport and the limits on road transport crossing the Alps. The implementation of the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) will assist in the redistribution of transport demand between the individual modes.

16. The development and improvement of conventions and agreements governing international transport will continue to be of importance. Particular attention will be given to updating regulations and provisions for the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail and inland water. The transport of dangerous goods will assume greater significance in the coming years as society insists upon stricter safety and environmental controls. The agreement governing the harmonization of the construction of motor vehicles is being revised to admit, among others, the European Community as a Party to it and to extend its application to cover countries beyond the ECE region. Special attention is also paid to improving the conditions for border-crossing in international transport by rail on a country-by-country basis, along the lines of existing international transport regulations.

17. The ECE will contribute to traffic safety by implementation of the revised Conventions on Road Traffic and Signs and Signals and raising public awareness through its next international campaign on road safety. The impact of transport infrastructure and operation on the environment is of increasing concern to ECE Governments. Work on reducing air and noise pollution as well as visual intrusion will continue, and cooperation with other Principal Subsidiary Bodies and other international organizations will be strengthened. Finally environmental and social concerns will be taken increasingly into account when discussing economic considerations of transport. Thus the public's concern and the level of acceptance of different nuisances created by transport will be taken fully into account.

18. Work will continue on the Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) Project under a funding agreement between the TEM countries and ECE as the Executing Agency. The Trans-European North-South Railway (TER) Project will be a UNDP/ECE project until the end of 1992. The TER Governments are considering the modalities of their future cooperation in the context of the project. Work will continue to increase the number of States participating in both projects and to develop east-west axes in addition to existing dimensions.

19. The establishment of an electronic data bank in the ECE will ensure that the Governments and organizations concerned have access to updated information on conventions, agreements and regulations. The necessary hardware and software have been acquired and staff are being trained to carry out this work.

20. Further workshops are planned for 1992 and 1993 aimed at assisting countries of central and eastern Europe in their transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy in the field of road, rail, inland waterway and combined transport.

Statistics

21. The Conference of European Statisticians will continue to develop its central role for cooperation among international organizations through joint activities in the development of statistical methodology, harmonized questionnaires and shared data collection. Coordinated activities in statistical methodological development will be ensured by joint meetings.

22. The secretariat will strengthen its support to the development and implementation of up-to-date statistical information technology. In this framework the activities dealing with the preparation of methodological

recommendations and standards for description of statistical information will have to be pursued as a necessary condition for efficient development of integrated statistical networking. The ECE will further accelerate its participation in the design of EDI for statistics in the group MD6 of the Western European EDIFACT Board. This will include the coordination in this work as it relates to transition countries in central and eastern Europe.

23. With regard to the European Comparison Programme a Consultation will be held in 1992 to discuss the preliminary results of the comparisons for 1990 in Group II, and the preparatory work for the 1993 round. The bilateral comparison with Austria will be retained as basic methodological approach, but further methodological development is needed with regard to the treatment of quality differences and to the possible rise of a multilateral comparison approach.

24. In the field of social and demographic statistics, work will focus on the preparation of publications dealing with international migration among countries in the ECE region and with statistics of women. A draft set of regional recommendations for housing and building statistics will also be prepared.

25. A ministerial meeting in Dobris Castle (CSFR) in June 1991 requested the preparation of a pan-European state-of-the-environment report by the European Community, in cooperation with the ECE. The decision also required assistance to the project by individual European countries and relevant international organizations, including UNEP, OECD, the Council of Europe, and IUCN.

26. In recent months, there has been a clear revival of interest in aggregate environmental indicators. The work session on economic statistics of the environment recommended that the Conference give this project higher priority. The Bureau of the Conference felt that this work needed to be resumed in cooperation with other international institutions such as the OECD.

27. In addition, work will be devoted to the development of draft classifications regarding statistics on environmental expenditures and wastes in order to arrive at a single ECE/EUROSTAT classification in these fields.

Trade

(a) Trade facilitation

28. In the years to come, trade facilitation will have to address issues raised by the need to maintain the appropriate balance between facilitation and regulation, as tighter regulations might have to be enforced, for example to protect the environment (transport of dangerous goods and hazardous wastes) or to ensure the protection of health (control of illicit drugs) or international security (arms control). Such regulatory measures should not, however, create barriers to legitimate international trade. To attain that objective, intergovernmental and inter-organizational cooperation will continue to be needed. Past experience has shown that the ECE has built up a network of activities and contacts which enable it to promote effectively such cooperation.

29. Activities dealing with the commercial and legal aspects of trade facilitation should aim at eliminating any constraints on international trade (with particular reference to the use of EDI). This could be achieved by ECE undertaking coordinating action with all interested parties and, when necessary, carrying out specific projects.

30. Although initially developed to cater for trade data interchange, EDIFACT can now be applied to any form of information interchange in fields which are not necessarily connected to international trade. This will raise the question of the possible enlargement of the scope of activity of ECE EDIFACT-related work to additional fields of application once the main requirements of international trade transactions have been met.

31. Nevertheless, in the years to come message development will remain an important component of EDIFACT work. In view of the increasing number of countries not members of the ECE involved in such development work, the Commission may have to enlarge its coordinating and "focal-point" activities to avoid divergencies in standards.

32. EDIFACT implementation, in particular for ECE member countries which are technically less advanced, will require the preparation of educational material, manuals, etc. and the provision of technical expertise - notably to the economies in transition.

33. Since the effective application of EDIFACT will be on a global scale, the five regional commissions with the collaboration of UNCTAD will continue to foster interregional cooperation in the field of trade facilitation, notably EDIFACT.

(b) Trade

34. The Committee on the Development of Trade will maintain its emphasis on activities which respond directly to the needs of member countries in transition in three areas: trade policy measures, industrial cooperation and preparation of guides on drafting international business contracts. In the first area, work will concentrate on links between trade and investment; encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises to engage in international trade; and organizing workshops on issues related to the above themes. In the area of industrial cooperation, emphasis will be placed on the means of favouring conditions for foreign direct investments in economies in transition. Priority will be devoted to legal issues related to the problems of the privatization of enterprises.

Economic analysis

35. The economic analysis of the secretariat will focus on current economic developments and prospects of central and east European countries and their relationship to the structural and institutional change required for the transition to the market system. The Economic Survey of Europe in 1991-1992 will highlight the economic disintegration and political fragmentation of the former Soviet Union and creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States as well as their impact on the former members of the Union and other countries. Economic developments in several successor states of the former Soviet Union

will be presented for the first time. Special chapters will be devoted to the hard core of the transition to the market system - property rights and privatization, on the one hand, and potential east-west migration on the other.

36. To the extent possible, the secretariat will pay due attention to the ongoing economic integration in Europe and North America, in particular to the creation of the EC single market. Another area of special concern, also to be reflected in the work of the Senior Economic Advisers, will be international trade and structural change, in particular with respect to the impact of the ongoing economic reforms on trade performance of central and east European countries and its significance for the size and forms of western support to the transition countries. The secretariat will continue its efforts to consider the interrelationship between environmental and economic aspects of developments in the region, especially in respect of the economies in transition.

37. Within the programme recently agreed upon with UNFPA for the period 1992-1995, and with the financial support of UNFPA, the secretariat will continue research and analysis on a number of demographic issues, including international migration in the region, with special emphasis on potential migration from the transition to the market economies. The ECE, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and UNFPA, will organize a European Population Conference in Geneva from 23 to 26 March 1993 as a regional contribution to the World Population Conference in 1994.

Energy

38. The energy programme will focus on the rational use of energy, sustainable energy developments and assistance to countries in transition. The project "Energy Efficiency 2000" entered into its operational phase in mid-1991. The project will increase contacts on trade and cooperation in energy-efficient technologies on the occasion of trade fairs, technical meetings and annual business conventions. It will organize three more seminars and establish listings of selected technologies, products, services, pilot and demonstration programmes.

39. Issues of energy economy and efficiency in the fields of coal, gas and electric power will continue to receive high attention, for example projects to develop more efficient coal-mining systems, enhance technical progress in opencast mines, improve the rational use of gas and elaborate a compendium on efficient technologies for new and renewable sources of energy.

40. The ECE energy sub-programme will focus on six priorities: the energy reforms in central and eastern Europe; the rational use of energy efficiency and conservation; the interface between energy and the environment; energy policies and prospects, and related statistics and projections; energy demand and supply for sustainable development; energy trade, trade facilitation and infrastructure. The issue of sustainable energy development will continue to receive high attention throughout these areas.

41. Assistance to countries in transition will be accorded the highest attention, and a study "Energy Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe - the Second Year" will be finalized in 1992. Workshops will be held on the recovery and use of coalbed methane; on gas tariffs and energy policy; on electric

power tariffs; on the market adaptation of coal industries; on the market adaptation of energy-intensive industries; and on the possibilities of refurbishing fossil-fired power stations, taking into account environmental requirements.

42. Energy economy and efficiency is one of the priorities of the work of the Committee. A comparative analysis of the different labelling systems for selected internationally-traded appliances will be undertaken. Furthermore, conservation developments and policies in the ECE region will be reviewed. An Ad hoc Meeting on Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones in the Russian Federation will be held in May 1992; a Symposium on Energy Efficiency and Economic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe is planned for 8-12 February 1993.

Agriculture

43. The Committee on Agriculture in March 1992 reaffirmed the reorientation of its activities towards the Commission's priority areas. The main areas of activity are economic analysis of the agri-food sector; agriculture and the environment; standardization of perishable produce and quality developments; and food and agricultural statistics. All these include components related directly to the Commission's guiding principle of sustainable development, which is the basis for all agricultural activities, and support for the economies in transition of central and eastern Europe. Special attention is being given to the transformation of collective farms into viable market-oriented units, quality developments and concepts for agricultural products and a number of projects aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Timber

44. The Timber Committee in January 1992 realigned its programme of work to correspond more fully with the Commission's priority areas and guiding principles. Programme activities now consist of analysis of developments for forestry and forest products in the long-, medium- and short-term; collection, dissemination and improvement of forest and forest products statistics; forest technology, management and training (jointly with FAO and ILO); issues related to a sound and sustainable development of the forest and forest products sector; assistance to the economies in transition in central and eastern Europe; and issues accorded special priority by the Commission or the Committee. Particular emphasis will be given to the completion of the forest resource assessment of temperate zones, preparations for the fifth European Timber Trends and Prospects study and developing the programme of workshops and other activities in support of the economies in transition.

Human settlements

45. The Committee on Human Settlements restructured its programme of owrk into two main categories: programme elements supporting sustainable human settlements development and elements supporting the process of socio-economic transition. The work will focus on housing issues, urban renewal and modernization, planning and management of sustainable human settlements, and the development of human settlements statistics in cooperation with the Conference of European Statisticians. Following the six workshops already

held on housing, urban renewal and building problems in countries in transition, workshops on Social Housing and on Land Registration Systems will be organized in 1992. The two other workshops to be held in 1992 will deal with questions of sustainable human settlements development and environmental impact assessment as related to land-use planning. A second-stage series of housing workshops is planned to start in 1993 concerning the country evaluations on housing issues. A summary report of the workshops already held, Housing Policy Guidelines, will be published by the end of 1992 to ease the dissemination of information and training within countries.

Industry and technology

46. Future work relating to industry will focus on three principal areas, namely statistics, issues of relevance to economies in transition and sustainable development. In the further development of statistics, emphasis will be placed on cooperation with other international organizations, in particular OECD, on all matters relating to statistics, on reducing the reporting burden on government statistical offices and on improving the methods used in the collection of data for the iron and steel industry, the chemical industry and the engineering industries and automation. Efforts will also be made to improve the ECE data base in these sectors and make it more readily available to users, in particular, those in Governments.

47. Workshops to assist economies in transition will deal with restructuring, privatization, quality control and greater efficiency in the steel and chemical industries. The third workshop on rehabilitation engineering to be held in Trebon (CSFR) in 1992 will focus on rehabilitation services in the transition countries.

48. With regard to sustainable development, work will focus on international standards for environmental protection and energy efficiency, steel-product quality, the use of scrap, substitutes in detergents, the management of plastic wastes and low-waste processes. The outcome of the High-Level Meeting on Cooperation and Sustainable development in the Chemical Industry and, in particular, the conclusions of that meeting will be considered by the Working Party on the Chemical Industry. Seminars will be organized on new materials, on foundry production and ecology, on metallurgy and ecology and on energy efficiency standards and labelling systems.

49. In the field of science and technology, emphasis will be placed on changes in national science and technology policies, and promotion of innovations, in particular in the economies in transition. Efforts will be made, in cooperation with OECD, to provide a basis for the collection of statistics relating to science and technology which can be used as science and technology indicators in these countries. Work will also continue on the Inventory of Safety Guidelines in Biotechnology.